



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/998,661	12/03/2001	Todd Charles McNeel	0914-1412-DV2	7552

6449 7590 12/02/2004

ROTHWELL, FIGG, ERNST & MANBECK, P.C.
1425 K STREET, N.W.
SUITE 800
WASHINGTON, DC 20005

EXAMINER

MADSEN, ROBERT A

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

1761

DATE MAILED: 12/02/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
P.O. Box 1450
ALEXANDRIA, VA 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS
AND INTERFERENCES

Application Number: 09/998,661
Filing Date: December 03, 2001
Appellant(s): MCNEEL ET AL.

MAILED
DEC 02 2004
GROUP 1700

Richard Wydeven
For Appellant

EXAMINER'S ANSWER

This is in response to the appeal brief filed September 16, 2004.

Art Unit: 1761

(1) *Real Party in Interest*

A statement identifying the real party in interest is contained in the brief.

(2) *Related Appeals and Interferences*

A statement identifying the related appeals and interferences which will directly affect or be directly affected by or have a bearing on the decision in the pending appeal is contained in the brief.

(3) *Status of Claims*

The statement of the status of the claims contained in the brief is correct.

(4) *Status of Amendments After Final*

The appellant's statement of the status of amendments after final rejection contained in the brief is correct.

(5) *Summary of Invention*

The summary of invention contained in the brief is correct.

(6) *Issues*

The appellant's statement of the issues in the brief is correct.

Art Unit: 1761

(7) Grouping of Claims

The rejection of claims 1-3 stand or fall together because appellant's brief does not include a statement that this grouping of claims does not stand or fall together and reasons in support thereof. See 37 CFR 1.192(c)(7).

(8) Claims Appealed

The copy of the appealed claims contained in the Appendix to the brief is correct.

(9) Prior Art of Record

4,122,198	Wisdom et al.	10-1978
4,052,838	Hilton et al.	10-1977
5,298,274	Khalsa	3-1994
3,520,248	MacKendrick	7-1970

(10) Grounds of Rejection

The following ground(s) of rejection are applicable to the appealed claims:

Claims 1 -3 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wisdom et al. (US 4122198) in view of Hilton et al. (US 4052838) and Khalsa (US 5298274) and MacKendrick (US 3520248). This rejection is set forth in a prior Office Action, mailed on November 6,2003.

(11) Response to Argument

In response to Appellant's arguments against the references individually, one cannot show nonobviousness by attacking references individually where the rejections are based on combinations of references. See *In re Keller*, 642 F.2d 413, 208 USPQ 871 (CCPA 1981); *In re Merck & Co.*, 800 F.2d 1091, 231 USPQ 375 (Fed. Cir. 1986).

In response to Appellant's argument that there is no suggestion to combine the references and the references do not suggest, the examiner recognizes that obviousness can only be established by combining or modifying the teachings of the prior art to produce the claimed invention where there is some teaching, suggestion, or motivation to do so found either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art. See *In re Fine*, 837 F.2d 1071, 5 USPQ2d 1596 (Fed. Cir. 1988) and *In re Jones*, 958 F.2d 347, 21 USPQ2d 1941 (Fed. Cir. 1992).

In this case, Wisdom et al. teach the general method of forming shaped tortilla chips wherein the chips are cut from a sheet of masa, preformed in molds, removed from the mold, and maintain a uniform shape in order to facilitate packing in a stacked arrangement (e.g. Column 2, lines 13-55). Wisdom et al differ from the pending claims in teaching (1) the particular chip shape (2) the particular method of frying/baking : the dough is held in the molds *during* frying or baking, such that the base edges and apex corners of successive tortilla chips are in alternating orientation in the mold.

Hilton et al. also teach a method of forming uniformly shaped potato and corn-based dough chips in a manner that facilitates subsequent packaging in a stacked arrangement. Unlike Wisdom et al., Hilton et al. teach a molding step completed during the frying of the corn dough-based products. Hilton et al. do provide motivation for modifying the fry step of Wisdom in that Hilton et al. attempts to solve the same problem as Wisdom et al (i.e. forming uniform chips for stackability) and offers the advantage of eliminating the separate molding step by combining both molding (i.e. restraining) and frying.

With respect to Khalsa, it was notoriously well known, as evidenced by the references cited (e.g. Hilton et al. teach corn based chips are shaped to fit into cylindrical canister and Wisdom et al. teach pieces that are 5 by 6 inch rectangles) that fried tortilla chips are produced in a variety of shapes. Khalsa is relied on as evidence of the conventionality of producing fried tortilla chips in a triangular shape. Should one elect to form a triangular shape, Khalsa teaches the method of cutting the dough for triangular tortilla shapes involves producing multiple triangles wherein the base edges and apex corners of successive tortilla chips are in alternating orientation (Illustrated by item 70 of Figure 2 in light of Figure 3, and explained in Column 5, lines 32-47). Selecting any particular conventional shaped, absent any persuasive evidence that Appellant's triangular shape is significant, would have been an obvious matter of choice.

Regarding MacKendrick, MacKendrick also teach a method of frying chips in molds to provide uniformly shaped chips. However, MacKendrick teaches that one obtains the uniformly shaped chips by frying the dough in the molds that

match the *cutting pattern* of the dough. Thus, in order to achieve the stackability desired by Wisdom et al., one of ordinary skill in the art would recognize that a frying the dough in molds that match the cutting pattern would provide *uniform* chips to facilitate subsequent packaging in a stacked arrangement. Thus, MacKendrick provides motivation for further modifying the fry step of Wisdom in that MacKendrick teaches when frying the chips in the mold, the mold should match the cutting pattern of the dough (i.e. the base edges and apex corners of successive tortilla chips are in alternating orientation for the triangle shapes of Khalsa) to obtain uniformly shaped fried chips, and *uniform* chips would facilitate subsequent packaging in a stacked arrangement.


Appellant argues that selecting a triangular shaped chip would not have been an obvious choice because triangular shaped chips were not conventionally stacked chips, and that Appellant is the first to disclose a method of producing stackable triangular chips. However, the primary reference, Wisdom et al., teach producing stackable uniformly shaped chips (Column 2, lines 52-55) and teaches rectangular shapes (e.g. Column 4, lines 12-37). If it is possible to produce a uniform stackable rectangular (e.g. Wisdom) or even circular/saddle shaped chip (e.g. Hilton), absent any showing of the contrary, one would expect it possible to produce a uniform triangle shape, especially since Hilton et al. teach molding the dough during frying achieves a uniform shape and MacKendrick teaches such molds matching the cutting pattern of the dough will assure a uniform shape. Thus, the art taken as a whole provides steps for obtaining uniformly shaped tortilla chips, and Khalsa teaches a conventional

Art Unit: 1761

shape for tortilla chips is triangular and illustrates the cutting pattern associated with triangular shaped chips (i.e. the base edges and apex corners of successive tortilla chips are in alternating orientation).

For the above reasons, it is believed that the rejections should be sustained.


Respectfully submitted,

Robert Madsen 
Examiner
Art Unit 1761


RAM
November 9, 2004

Conferees

Milton Cano


MILTON I. CANO
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 1700

Glenn Caldarola


Glenn Caldarola
Supervisory Patent Examiner
Technology Center 1700

ROTHWELL, FIGG, ERNST & MANBECK, P.C.
1425 K STREET, N.W.
SUITE 800
WASHINGTON, DC 20005